

What is claimed is:

1. A system for recording and storing a program broadcast in at least one channel, said system comprising:
one or more slave apparatus for setting a program for timer recording when said slave apparatus is
5 instructed to set the program for timer recording, and recording the program at a time when the program set for timer recording is broadcast; and
a master apparatus for selecting a slave apparatus to record a program such that a plurality of timer
10 recording settings are not made at one time in one apparatus, when the program to be recorded is determined, and instructing the selected slave apparatus to set the program for timer recording.
- 15 2. A system according to claim 1, wherein said master apparatus has means for, if a slave apparatus to record a program cannot be selected, rearranging timer recording settings made in the slave apparatus to retain a slave
20 slave apparatus to record a program, instructing the retained slave apparatus to change timer recording settings and set the program for timer recording, and instructing other slave apparatus in which timer recording settings are changed to change timer recording settings, and wherein each of said slave apparatus has means for, if instructed

25 to change timer recording settings by said master
apparatus, changing timer recording settings.

3. A system according to claim 1, wherein said master
apparatus has means for, if instructed to start recording
a program without setting timer recording therefor,
instructing a slave apparatus which has not recorded
5 programs so far and whose period of time up to the
recording start time of a first program set for timer
recording is the longest, to start recording the program,
and wherein each of said slave apparatus has means for, if
instructed to start recording a program, immediately
10 starting to record said program.

4. A system according to claim 1, wherein said master
apparatus has means for, if instructed to start recording
a program without setting timer recording therefor,
rearranging timer recording settings made in the slave
5 apparatus, increasing, as much as possible, a period of
time up to the recording start time of a first program set
for timer recording in either one of the slave apparatus,
instructing the slave apparatus in which timer recording
settings are changed to change timer recording settings,
10 and instructing the slave apparatus whose period of time
up to the recording start time has been increased as much
as possible to start recording the program, and wherein
each of said slave apparatus has means for, if instructed

15 to change timer recording settings by said master
apparatus, changing timer recording settings, and, if
instructed to start recording a program, immediately
starting to record said program.

5. A system according to claim 1, wherein said master
apparatus has means for, if instructed to start recording
a program without setting timer recording therefor,
selecting a slave apparatus which has not recorded
5 programs so far and which has not made timer recording
settings until the end time of a program instructed to
start being recorded, and instructing the selected slave
apparatus to start recording the program, and wherein each
of said slave apparatus has means for, if instructed to
10 start recording a program, immediately starting to record
said program.

6. A system according to claim 1, wherein said master
apparatus and each of said slave apparatus are connected
to each other via a communication line, each of said slave
apparatus has means for indicating a program set for timer
5 recording by the slave apparatus to said master apparatus
via said communication line, and said master apparatus has
means for instructing the slave apparatus to set the
program for timer recording via said communication line.

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7. A system according to claim 6, wherein each of said slave apparatus has means for transmitting a playback signal produced by playing back a program via said communication line to said master apparatus, and said master apparatus has means for outputting the program to an output device for displaying the program when the master apparatus has received the playback signal via said communication line.

8. A system according to claim 1, wherein said master apparatus comprises a computer.

9. A system according to claim 1, wherein said slave apparatus comprise respective add-on modules which can be incorporated in said master apparatus.

10. A system according to claim 1, wherein said slave apparatus comprise a desired number of software modules that can be executed by said master apparatus.

11. A system for recording and storing a program broadcast in at least one channel, said system comprising:
one or more slave apparatus for determining whether the slave apparatus are capable of recording a program or not in response to an inquiry as to whether the slave apparatus are capable of recording the program, and, if the slave apparatus are capable of recording the program,

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10 sending a corresponding response, setting the program for
timer recording, and recording the program when a time to
broadcast the program is reached; and

15 a master apparatus for, if a program to be recorded
is determined, successively asking the slave apparatus
about whether the slave apparatus are capable of recording
the program until the response indicating that the slave
apparatus are capable of recording the program is
received, and, if said response is received from a slave
apparatus, instructing the slave apparatus which has sent
the response to set the program for timer recording.

12. A system according to claim 11, wherein said master
apparatus has means for, if said response indicating that
the slave apparatus are capable of recording the program
is not received from any of the slave apparatus,
5 rearranging timer recording settings made in the slave
apparatus to retain a slave apparatus to record the
program.

13. A system according to claim 11, wherein said master
apparatus and each of said slave apparatus are connected
to each other via a communication line, and said master
apparatus has means for asking the slave apparatus about
5 whether the slave apparatus are capable of recording the
program.

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14. A system according to claim 13, wherein each of said
slave apparatus has means for transmitting a playback
signal produced by playing back a program via said
communication line to said master apparatus, and said
5 master apparatus has means for outputting the program to
an output device for displaying programs when the master
apparatus has received the playback signal via said
communication line.

15. A system according to claim 14, wherein said master
apparatus has means for displaying, on said output device,
a list of programs stored in said slave apparatus in
association with the slave apparatus and times at which
5 the programs have been recorded, for the user to select a
program to be played back from the list.

16. A system according to claim 14, wherein said master
apparatus has a function to record and play back said
program.

17. A system according to claim 11, wherein said master
apparatus comprises a computer.

18. A system according to claim 11, wherein said slave
apparatus comprise respective add-on modules which can be
incorporated in said master apparatus.

19. A system according to claim 11, wherein said slave apparatus comprise a desired number of software modules that can be executed by said master apparatus.

20. A system for recording and storing a program broadcast on at least one channel, said system comprising:

a master apparatus; and

one or more slave apparatus;

5 said master apparatus comprising:

a first tuner for extracting a signal on an indicated channel from a received broadcast signal;

a first encoder for encoding the signal on said channel to generate program data;

10 a first memory for storing said program data;

a selector for selecting one of said program data read from said first memory and program data input from another device;

15 a decoder for decoding said program data input from said selector; and

a controller for grasping programs set for timer recording in each of all the apparatus, and, if a program to be recorded is determined, selecting an apparatus to record the program such that a plurality of timer recording settings are not made at one time in one apparatus, and, if the master apparatus is selected, extracting a channel on which the program is broadcast with said first tuner when a time to broadcast the program

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is reached, generating program data of the program with
25 said first encoder, and storing the program data in said
first memory, and, if a slave apparatus other than the
master apparatus is selected, instructing the selected
slave apparatus to set the program for timer recording,
and, if the program data of a program instructed by the
30 user to be played back is stored in said first memory of
the master apparatus, reading the program data from said
first memory, and decoding the program data with said
first decoder, and, if the program data of a program
instructed by the user to be played back is stored in a
35 slave apparatus other than the master apparatus,
instructing said slave apparatus to play back the program,
and decoding the program data input from said slave
apparatus with said first decoder;

each of said slave apparatus comprising:

40 a second tuner for extracting a signal on an
indicated channel from a received broadcast signal;
a second encoder for encoding the signal on said
channel to generate program data;
a second memory for storing said program data; and
45 a controller for extracting a channel on which a
program set for timer recording is broadcast with said
second tuner when a time to broadcast the program is
reached, generating program data of the program with said
second encoder, storing the program data in said second
50 memory, reading the program data of a program instructed

by said master apparatus to be played back from said second memory, and transmitting the read program data to said master apparatus.

21. A system according to claim 20, wherein said slave apparatus comprise respective add-on modules which can be incorporated in said master apparatus.

22. A system according to claim 20, wherein said slave apparatus comprise a desired number of software modules that can be executed by said master apparatus.

23. An apparatus in a system for recording and storing a program broadcast on at least one channel, said apparatus comprising:

- a tuner for extracting a signal on an indicated
- 5 channel from a received broadcast signal;
- an encoder for encoding the signal on said channel to generate program data;
- a memory for storing said program data;
- a decoder for decoding said program data read from
- 10 said memory; and
- a controller for grasping programs set for timer recording in a plurality of apparatus including said apparatus itself, and, if a program to be recorded is determined, selecting an apparatus to record the program
- 15 such that a plurality of timer recording settings are not

made at one time in one apparatus, and, if said apparatus
itself is selected, extracting a channel on which the
program is broadcast with said tuner when a time to
broadcast the program is reached, generating program data
20 of the program with said encoder, and storing the program
data in said memory, and, if an apparatus other than said
apparatus itself is selected, instructing the selected
apparatus to set the program for timer recording, and, if
the program data of a program instructed by the user to be
25 played back is stored in said memory of the apparatus
itself, reading the program data from said memory, and
decoding the program data with said decoder, and, if the
program data of a program instructed by the user to be
played back is stored in an apparatus other than the
30 apparatus itself, instructing said other apparatus to play
back the program, and decoding the program data input from
the other apparatus with said decoder.

24. An apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said
controller has means for, if an apparatus to record a
program cannot be selected, rearranging timer recording
settings made in the apparatus to retain an apparatus to
5 record a program, instructing the retained apparatus to
change timer recording settings and set the program for
timer recording, and instructing other apparatus in which
timer recording settings are changed to change timer
recording settings.

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25. An apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said controller has means for, if instructed to start recording a program without setting timer recording therefor, instructing an apparatus which has not recorded programs
5 so far and whose period of time up to the recording start time of a first program set for timer recording is the longest, to start recording the program,

26. An apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said controller has means for, if instructed to start recording a program without setting timer recording therefor, rearranging timer recording settings made in the
5 apparatus, increasing, as much as possible, a period of time up to the recording start time of a first program set for timer recording in either one of the apparatus, instructing the apparatus in which timer recording settings are changed to change timer recording settings,
10 and instructing the apparatus whose period of time up to the recording start time has been increased as much as possible to start recording the program.

27. An apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said controller has means for, if instructed to start recording a program without setting timer recording therefor, selecting an apparatus which has not recorded programs so
5 far and which has not made timer recording settings until

the end time of a program instructed to start being recorded, and instructing the selected apparatus to start recording the program.

28. An apparatus for recording and storing a broadcast program, said apparatus comprising:

a temporary memory for temporarily storing up to a predetermined amount of program data;

5 a permanent memory for storing program data selected by the user as program data to be permanently stored from among the program data stored in said temporary memory;

a recording controller for successively storing the program data of programs set for timer recording in said
10 temporary memory, and partly deleting the program data recorded in said temporary memory in the past if the program data stored in said temporary memory exceeds said predetermined amount;

a saving controller for transferring the program
15 data selected by the user as program data to be permanently stored from among the program data stored in said temporary memory to said permanent memory; and

a playback controller for playing back a program selected by the user from the programs whose program data
20 have been stored in said temporary memory and/or said permanent memory.

29. An apparatus according to claim 28, wherein said recording controller has means for displaying a period of time for which the program data stored in said temporary memory are held, on an output device for displaying programs.

30. An apparatus according to claim 28, further comprising means for allowing the user to set memory capacities to said temporary memory and said permanent memory.

31. A system for recording a program broadcast on at least one channel, storing program data of the program, and playing back the program when instructed by the user, said system comprising:

one or more slave apparatus for automatically continuously recording a program on a predetermined channel and playing back the recorded program as instructed; and

a master apparatus for, when the user is to determine a channel on which each of the slave apparatus automatically continuously records a program and to select a program to be played back on the channel, displaying a list of programs recorded by all the slave apparatus in association with channels and times at which the programs are recorded, on an output device for displaying programs, and, if a program to be displayed is selected by the user

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with a channel and a time, controlling the slave apparatus
which has recorded the program to play back the program,
and, if the user changes the channel to another channel,
20 controls the slave apparatus which has recorded a program
on the other channel at the same time as the former
channel to play back the program on the other channel.

32. A system according to claim 31, wherein said slave
apparatus comprise respective add-on modules which can be
incorporated in said master apparatus.

33. A system according to claim 31, wherein said slave
apparatus comprise a desired number of software modules
that can be executed by said master apparatus.

34. A system for recording and storing a program
broadcast on at least one channel, said system comprising:

a master apparatus; and

one or more slave apparatus;

5 said master apparatus comprising:

a first memory for storing the program data of
recorded programs;

a first decoder for decoding program data read from
said first memory; and

10 a controller for grasping programs recorded by each
of all the apparatus, and, if the program data of a
program instructed by the user to be played back is stored

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in the first memory of the master apparatus, reading the
program data from said first memory, decoding the program
15 data into a program signal with said first decoder,
outputting the program signal to an output device for
displaying programs, and, if the program data of a program
instructed by the user to be played back is stored in a
slave apparatus, instructing the slave apparatus to play
20 back the program, outputting a program signal received
from the slave apparatus to said output device, and, if
the program data of a program which is highly likely to be
played back by a subsequent control action of the user is
stored in the first memory of the master apparatus,
25 preparing the master apparatus to read the program data
from said first memory and decode the program data with
said first decoder, and, if the program data of a program
which is highly likely to be played back by a subsequent
control action of the user is stored in a slave apparatus,
30 instructing the slave apparatus to prepare said slave
apparatus to play back the program; and
each of said slave apparatus comprising:
a second memory for storing said program data;
a second decoder for decoding the program data read
35 from said second memory into a program signal; and
a controller for reading the program data of a
program instructed by said master apparatus to be played
back from said second memory, decoding the program data
into a program signal with said second decoder,

40 transmitting the program signal to said master apparatus,
reading the program data of the program instructed to be
prepared for playback from said second memory, and
preparing said second decoder to decode the program data.

35. A system according to claim 34, wherein said slave
apparatus comprise respective add-on modules which can be
incorporated in said master apparatus.

36. A system according to claim 34, wherein said slave
apparatus comprise a desired number of software modules
that can be executed by said master apparatus.

37. An apparatus in a system for recording and storing a
program broadcast on at least one channel, said apparatus
comprising:

- 5 a memory for storing the program data of recorded
programs;
- a decoder for decoding program data read from said
memory; and
- 10 a controller for grasping programs recorded by each
of all apparatus of the system, and, if the program data
of a program instructed by the user to be played back is
stored in the memory of the apparatus itself, reading the
program data from said memory, decoding the program data
into a program signal with said decoder, outputting the
program signal to an output device for displaying

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15 programs, and, if the program data of a program instructed
by the user to be played back is stored in an apparatus
other than said apparatus itself, instructing the other
apparatus to play back the program, outputting a program
signal received from the other apparatus to said output
20 device, and, if the program data of a program which is
highly likely to be played back by a subsequent control
action of the user is stored in the memory of said
apparatus itself, preparing the apparatus itself to read
the program data from said memory and decode the program
25 data with said decoder, and, if the program data of a
program which is highly likely to be played back by a
subsequent control action of the user is stored in an
apparatus other than the apparatus itself, instructing the
other apparatus to prepare said other apparatus to play
30 back the program.

38. An apparatus for controlling a plurality of
broadcast recording apparatus each for, if instructed to
set a program for timer recording, setting the program for
timer recording, and recording the program when a time to
5 broadcast the program set for timer recording is reached,
said apparatus comprising:

means for selecting one of the broadcast recording
apparatus to record the program such that a plurality of
timer recording settings are not made at one time in one
10 apparatus; and

means for instructing the selected broadcast recording apparatus to set the program for timer recording.

39. An apparatus according to claim 38, further comprising means for, if an apparatus to record a program cannot be selected, rearranging timer recording settings made in the apparatus to retain an apparatus to record a
5 program, instructing the retained apparatus to change timer recording settings and set the program for timer recording, and instructing other apparatus in which timer recording settings are changed to change timer recording settings.

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40. A system for recording and storing a plurality of units of data from data broadcast in units selected by a single tuner, said system comprising:

one or more slave apparatus for, if instructed to
5 set a unit of data for timer recording, setting the data for timer recording, and recording the data when a time to broadcast the data is reached; and

a master apparatus for grasping data set for timer recording by said slave apparatus, and, if data to be
10 recorded is determined, selecting one of the slave apparatus such that a plurality of timer recording settings are not made at one time in one apparatus, and

instructing the selected slave apparatus to set the data
for timer recording.

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41. A system according to claim 40, wherein each of said
units comprises a transport stream.

42. A computer program for use in an apparatus in a
system for recording and storing a program in at least one
system, the apparatus having a tuner for extracting a
signal in an indicated channel from a received broadcast
5 signal, an encoder for encoding the signal on said channel
to generate program data, a memory for storing said
program data, and a decoder for decoding said program data
stored in said memory, said computer program comprising:

a first instruction set for grasping programs set
10 for timer recording in a plurality of apparatus including
said apparatus itself, and, if a program to be recorded is
determined, selecting an apparatus to record the program
such that a plurality of timer recording settings are not
made at one time in one apparatus:

15 a second instruction set for, if said apparatus
itself is selected, instructing said tuner to extract a
channel on which the program is broadcast when a time to
broadcast the program is reached;

a third instruction set for instructing said encoder
20 to generate program data of the program, and instructing
said memory to store the program data;

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a fourth instruction set for, if an apparatus other than said apparatus itself is selected, instructing the selected apparatus to set the program for timer recording;

25 a fifth instruction set for, if the program data of a program instructed by the user to be played back is stored in said memory of the apparatus itself, instructing said memory to read the program data, and instructing said decoder to decode the program data; and

30 a sixth instruction set for, if the program data of a program instructed by the user to be played back is stored in an apparatus other than the apparatus itself, instructing said other apparatus to play back the program, and instructing said decoder to decode the program data
35 input from the other apparatus.

43. A computer program according to claim 42, further comprising:

a seventh instruction set for, if an apparatus to record a program cannot be selected, rearranging timer
5 recording settings made in the apparatus to retain an apparatus to record a program; and

an eighth instruction set for instructing the retained apparatus to change timer recording settings and set the program for timer recording, and instructing other
10 apparatus in which timer recording settings are changed to change timer recording settings.

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5 a first instruction set for successively recording
program data of programs set for timer recording in said
first memory, and partly deleting the program data
recorded in said first memory in the past if the program
data stored in said first memory exceeds a predetermined
amount;

10 a second instruction set for transferring program
data selected by the user as program data to be
permanently saved from among the program data stored in
said first memory to said second memory; and

15 a third instruction set for playing back a program
selected by the user from the programs whose program data
have been stored in said first memory and/or said second
memory.

47. A computer program for use in an apparatus in a
system for recording and storing a program broadcast on at
least one channel, said apparatus having a memory for
storing program data of a recorded program and a decoder
5 for decoding program data read from said memory, said
computer program comprising:

a first instruction set for grasping programs set
for timer recording in all apparatus of the system, and,
if the program data of a program instructed by the user to
10 be played back is stored in the memory of the apparatus
itself, reading the program data from said memory,
instructing said decoder to decode the program data into a

program signal, and outputting the program signal to an output device for displaying programs;

15 a second instruction set for, if the program data of a program instructed by the user to be played back is stored in an apparatus other than said apparatus itself, instructing the other apparatus to play back the program, and outputting a program signal received from the other
20 apparatus to said output device;

 a third instruction set for, if the program data of a program which is highly likely to be played back by a subsequent control action of the user is stored in the memory of said apparatus itself, preparing the apparatus
25 itself to read the program data from said memory and decode the program data with said decoder; and

 a fourth instruction set for, if the program data of a program which is highly likely to be played back by a subsequent control action of the user is stored in an
30 apparatus other than the apparatus itself, instructing the other apparatus to prepare said other apparatus to play back the program.

48. A computer program for use in an apparatus having a memory for storing program data of a recorded program and a decoder for decoding program data read from said memory into a program signal, said computer program comprising:

5 a first instruction set for reading from said memory the program data of a program instructed to be played back

and instructing said decoder to decode said program data into a program signal and transmit the program signal; and

10 a second instruction set for reading from said memory the program data of a program instructed to be prepared for playback and instructing said decoder to prepare the decoder to decode the program data.

49. A computer program for controlling a plurality of apparatus each for, if instructed to set a program for timer recording, setting the program for timer recording, and recording the program when a time to broadcast the
5 program set for timer recording is reached, said computer program comprising:

a first instruction set for selecting one of the apparatus to record the program such that a plurality of timer recording settings are not made at one time in one
10 apparatus; and

a second instruction set for assigning the selected apparatus to setting the program for timer recording.

50. A computer program according to claim 49, further comprising:

a third instruction set for, if an apparatus to record a program cannot be selected, rearranging timer
5 recording settings made in the apparatus to retain an apparatus to record a program; and

a fourth instruction set for instructing the
retained apparatus to change timer recording settings and
set the program for timer recording, and instructing other
10 apparatus in which timer recording settings are changed to
change timer recording settings.